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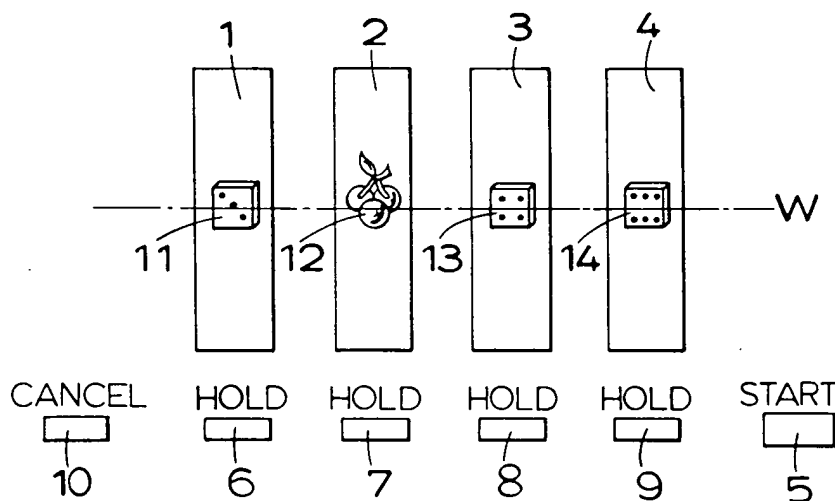
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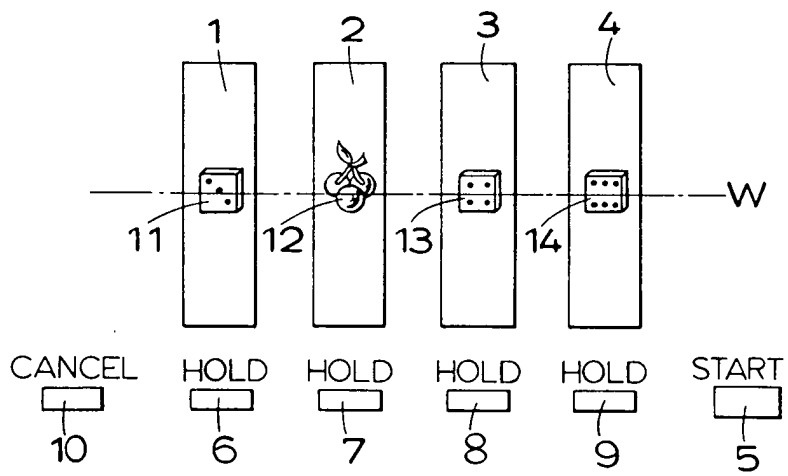
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(54) Gaming and amusement machines

(57) A fruit machine provides a special dice feature in which the reels (1, 2, 3 and 4) are advanced together stepwise and the player uses 'hold' buttons (6, 7, 8 and 9) to halt the reels with the aim of bringing dice symbols (11, 13 and 14) onto the win line W, or causing them to pass through the win line W. On completion of the feature a prize is awarded in accordance with the total number of spots on the dice (11, 13 and 14) which are on, or have passed through, the win line W.



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SPECIFICATION

Gaming and amusement machines

5 This invention relates to gaming or amusement-with-prizes machines of the kind generally known as 'fruit machines', in which three, or sometimes more, reels carrying symbols are set in rotation and then stop in turn at
10 random intervals and if the resulting combination of symbols on the three (or more) reels appearing on a given line in the display the 'win line' is one which has been designated a winning combination, the player receives an
15 award or a credit. Instead of actual reels, it is known to use other forms of display which stimulate rotating reels to a greater or lesser degree, for example the Panascope, or a video screen on which images of the symbols appear. Such machines will hereinafter be referred to as of the kind set forth.

Generally there are several different kinds of symbols (usually, but by no means essentially fruit) and the designated winning combinations
25 are represented by all three symbols on the 'win' line being identical. A different payout is awarded according to whether the matching symbols are, for example, plums, or another fruit, for example cherries. It is also well
30 known to award a win when the matching symbols appear on only two of the three reels, provided they are the right symbol, for example it is common to award a win for two cherries on reels 1 and 2, regardless of what
35 symbol is present on reel 3.

Amongst the countless variations on the basic fruit machine game, one which has proved popular is the so-called 'nudge' feature, by which the player is sometimes given the
40 opportunity, at the end of a game which did not result in a win, to advance one or more of the reels by a single step, or sometimes more than one step, to bring a fresh symbol onto the win line and thereby change what
45 was a losing combination into a winning one. This feature is offered apparently at random, although usually not totally at random, as the frequency with which it appears may be influenced by the immediate past history of winning and non-winning games.

Also well known is a 'hold' feature offered at random, or pseudo-random, at the start of a game and allowing one or more reels to be held stationary during that game to retain on
55 the winning line the symbol or symbols appearing on the line at the end of the preceding game. This is used where the symbol appears to the player to be promising towards making up a valuable winning combination in the next game.

60 Many special features are provided nowadays in fruit machines, indeed they have to some extent taken over from the basic game, in that most of the bigger wins are obtained
65 by the features rather than by the initial result

when the reels first come to a halt. In a so called 'ladder' or 'trail' feature, steps in the ladder or trail may be illuminated as a result of certain symbols, e.g. symbols bearing superimposed numbers, appearing on the win
70 line. When the 'ladder' or 'trail' is completed, a jackpot prize or another feature may be awarded. Other features proposed have involved variations on the basic 'nudge' idea,
75 including one in which, on randomly or pseudo-randomly selected occasions after a non-winning normal game, each of the reels in turn advances stepwise in one direction or the other and 'hold' buttons are operated by the
80 player to hold any selected symbol on the associated reel on the winning line. In this way he has a chance to build up a winning combination. Other arrangements have been proposed involving the player having control
85 over both the indexing and the holding.

The aim of the invention is to provide a still further and particularly attractive feature on these lines.

According to the invention in a gaming or
90 amusement-with-prizes machine of the kind set forth at least one of the symbols on each reel is a 'numbered' symbol representing a number and on certain occasions, for example a randomly or pseudo-randomly at the end of
95 non-winning game when a certain so called 'ladder' or 'trail' has been built up as a result of a number of previous games, a feature is awarded in which the player controls an indexing operation of the reels with the aim of
100 bringing any of the numbered symbols onto the win line or causing them to pass through the win line and, on completion of the feature, a prize is awarded in accordance with the total sum of the numbers represented by the
105 numbered symbols which have been brought onto the win line or which have passed through the win line.

The indexing operation, for instance, may by a conventional 'nudge' feature, but preferably in the indexing operation all the reels are advanced together stepwise and the player uses
110 'hold' buttons to bring the reels selectively and individually to halt. The numbered symbols may be for instance, 'fruit' symbols with numbers superimposed on them or representations of playing cards. Preferably, however, the numbered symbols are representations of the faces of conventional dice. Each of these
115 dice has a number of spots from one to six and on completion of the special feature of the prize award is in accordance with the total number of spots on the dice which are on the win line.

The present invention will now be explained further by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawing. In the drawing a fruit machine has four reels, 1, 2, 3 and 4, a 'start' button 5, four 'hold' buttons
120 6, 7, 8 and 9 each associated with a respective one of the reels 1, 2, 3 and 4, and a
130

'cancel' button 10. Each of the reels has twenty-four symbol positions, two of which are occupied by dice symbols, e.g. 11, 13 and 14, making eight dice in all. On certain occasions, for example on completion of a so-called 'ladder' or 'trail', a special feature is awarded in which the reels are advanced together stepwise for a predetermined number of steps and the player uses the hold buttons 6, 7, 8 and 9 to bring the reels selectively and individually to halt and his aim is to bring any of the dice symbols onto the win line W. For every one of the dice on the win line at the end of the special feature a prize of one pound per spot is awarded. For a prize it is not essential that there should be dice on the win line on all four reels. For example the drawing shows a die 11 with three spots, a cherry 12, a die 13 with four spots and a die 20 14 with six spots, a combination which would result in a prize of thirteen pounds.

Another possibility is that the player may selectively advance one or more of the reels up or down with the aim of causing one or more of the dice to pass through the win line and the total prize awarded is in accordance with the total sum of the spots on the dice which have passed through the win line. Thus when there are two or more dice on a reel it may be possible for the player to cause more than one die on that reel to pass through the win line and so gain a greater prize.

The dice may also figure in winning combinations in a normal game. For example any two dice on the win line, regardless of the number of spots, might pay out twenty pence, and any three could pay out forty pence.

In a further development of the special dice feature, after the prize has been awarded according to the total number of spots on the dice which have been brought onto or passed through the win line, all the reels are then indexed together through a predetermined number of steps, e.g. three, and if any further dice are brought onto or pass through the win line an addition is made to the prize in accordance with the total number of spots on the further die or dice.

The machine may include the usual other features of nudging and holding, trails, and gambles without affecting the invention.

CLAIMS

1. A gaming or amusement-with-prizes machine of the kind set forth wherein at least one of the symbols on each reel is a 'numbered' symbol representing a number and on certain occasions a feature is awarded in which the player controls an indexing operation of the reels with the aim of bringing any of the numbered symbols onto the win line or causing them to pass through the win line and, on completion of the indexing operation, a prize is awarded in accordance with the to-

tal sum of the numbers represented by the numbered symbols which have been brought onto the win line or which have passed through the win line.

2. A gaming or amusement-with-prizes machine as claimed in claim 1 in which all the reels are advanced together stepwise in the indexing operation and the player uses 'hold' buttons to bring the reels selectively and individually to halt.

3. A gaming or amusement-with-prizes machine as claimed in claim 1 in which the player selectively advances one or more of the reels up or down in the indexing operation.

4. A gaming or amusement-with-prizes machine as claimed in claim 2 or claim 3 in which after the prize has been awarded according to the total sum of the numbers which have been brought onto or passed through the win line, all the reels are then indexed together through a predetermined number of steps and if any further numbered symbols are brought onto or pass through the win line a further prize is awarded in accordance with the total sum of the numbers represented by those further symbols.

5. A gaming or amusement-with-prizes machine as claimed in any of the preceding claims in which the numbered symbols are representations of the faces of conventional dice, each of which has a number of spots from one to six and, on completion of the feature, the prize awarded is in accordance with the total number of spots on the dice which have been brought onto or which have passed through the win line.

6. A gaming or amusement-with-prizes machine as claimed in any of the preceding claims in which the numbered symbols also figure in winning combinations in a normal game.

7. A gaming or amusement-with-prizes machine substantially as described herein with reference to the accompanying drawings.

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